

Exploring Connections

Richard III & Looking for Richard



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*'In this elective, students will explore how **meanings** of a pair of texts can be shaped and **reshaped** by considering the nature of the **connections** between them. Exploration of the **connections** between the texts will enhance understanding of the **values** and **contexts** of each text. Relationships between these texts may be implicit or explicit. Connections may be established through direct or indirect references, **contexts**, **values**, **ideas**, and the use of language **forms and features**' (BOS Prescriptions 2009 – 2012).*

HSC Examination Rubric

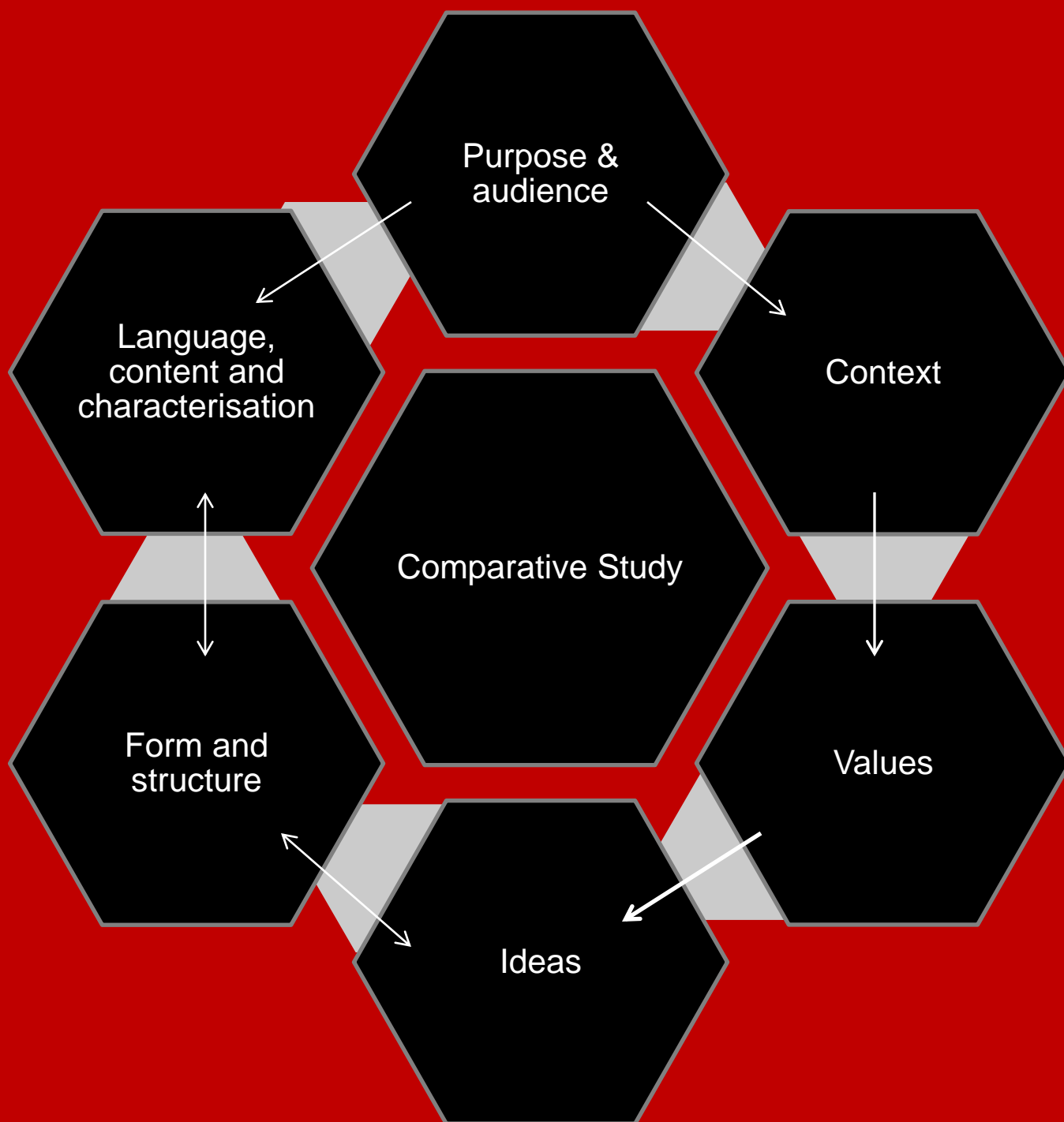
In your answer you will be assessed on how well you:

- demonstrate understanding of the **meanings** of a pair of texts when considered **together**
- **evaluate** the **relationships** between texts and contexts
- organise, develop and express ideas using language appropriate to audience, purpose and form

Connections

- Look through the lens of the doco when you explore the play and make the key connections considering how context shapes and reshapes meaning.





- New Historicism: Each composer is influenced (either implicitly or explicitly) by their respective contexts which affects WHY and HOW they explore characters, themes and values.
- Why did Pacino choose this play?
- HOW does Shakespeare SHAPE certain characters, ideas and values through his play, and how and why does Pacino RESHAPE these aspects?
- What is different and what has remained constant?
- What does this tell you?

- What do the texts tell you about the human experience?
- Hastings: *'O momentary grace of mortal men, / Which we more hunt for than the grace of God.'* (AIII, siv)
- Brackenbury echoes the same sentiment: *'Princes have but their titles for their glories...'* (AI, siv)

*'The cloud capp'd towers, the gorgeous
palaces,*

*The solemn temples, the great globe
itself.*

Yea, all which it inherit shall dissolve,

*And like this insubstantial pageant
faded,*

Leave not a rack behind.

*We are such stuff as dreams are made
of'*

Context and Meaning

- *Richard III* mirrors Shakespeare's concerns about the flaws of renaissance humanist philosophy that placed faith in the divinity and ability of the individual to design their own destiny.
- This philosophy gained credibility with the emergence of the merchant class who through exploration and subsequent trade had carved out their own fortune and future.
- Coupled with the focus on self-determinism rather than God's will, was the emergence of Machiavelli's political discourse that asserted that the pursuit of power should not be hindered by morality.
- Richard is a Machiavellian villain but this complex character realises the problems that arise from denying one's conscience.

Context and Meaning

- *Looking for Richard* picks up on the same concerns re the potential problems associated with individualism.
- The pursuit of political power and wealth associated with the American Dream in the 1990's has resulted in political corruption and the consolidation of multinational companies willing to sacrifice the welfare of the workers for profit.
- The previous emergence of dictators such as Hitler and Mussolini was a significant reminder of the tragic consequences when power is abused by ruthless individuals.

Meta-Drama

- *‘These our actors as I foretold you, were all spirits and are melted into air, into thin air.’*
- *‘We are such stuff as dreams are made on... .. and our little life is rounded with a sleep.’*
- Shakespeare appropriates and transforms the ancient analogical trope of *theatrum mundi* – all the world’s a stage.
- His self-reflexive meditation on the art of theatre suspends the dramatic illusion and in so doing sets up a conceptual mirror which illuminates the conventional, illusory, and theatrical nature of everyday life.

Purpose

Looking for Richard

- Connect a modern audience with Shakespeare through a play about political intrigue and corruption.
- *‘How do you communicate Shakespeare to an American audience?’*
- *“We could communicate both our passions for it, out understanding that we come to...”*
- Provide the back story
- Establish that the actor owns the role.
- Transcends its purpose



Purpose

Richard III

- Entertain through an enigmatic villain and provoke thought about Renaissance humanism.
- Affirming to a Elizabethan audience of the emergent middle class and the nobility the Tudor's legitimate right to the throne. Richmond who defeats Richard at the Battle of Bosworth and becomes king of a united England was Henry Tudor, the great-grandfather of Elizabeth 1, the ruling monarch when this play was performed.



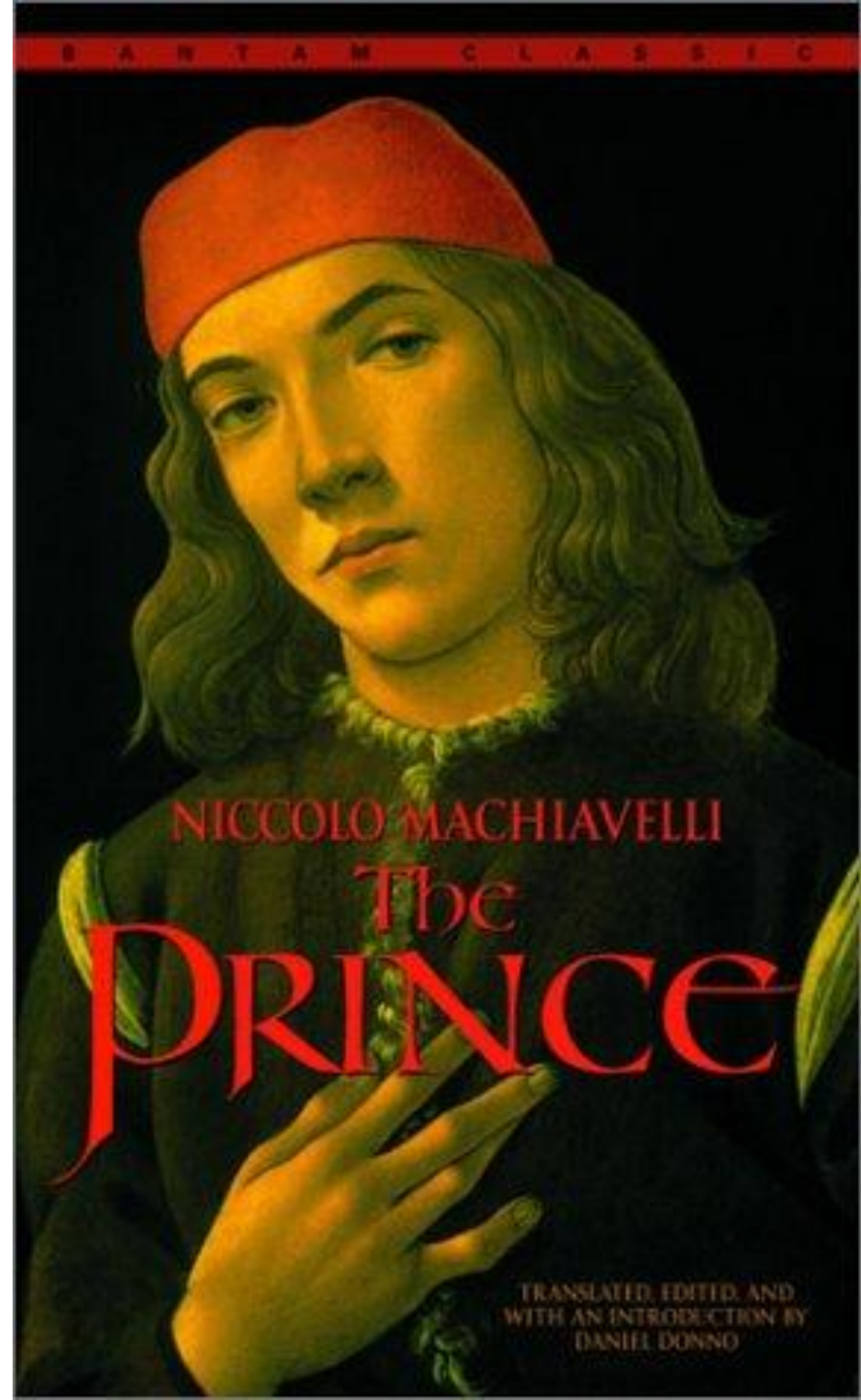
The Essay

1. How texts are shaped by their historical, social and cultural context at the time of production
2. A composer's perspective and purpose shape the form, structure and language features of a text and the values that are privileged.
3. The values focused on are those that the composer believes are compromised by the actions of humanity.
4. The comparative study with *Looking for Richard* as the lens to explore and examine the play *Richard III* illuminates the play's main ideas.
5. The questions can vary from a narrow focus on an idea such as ambition or a character such as Richard or Buckingham to a broader question that requires you to narrow the focus, such as one on what the texts reveal about the human condition.

Context

Richard III

- **Political stability following a period of unrest and threats to the throne:** As well as being politically correct in its support of the reigning Tudors, the play written in the Elizabethan period would have captured the imagination of an audience aware of the ongoing political tension and intrigue
- **Theatre:** In 1558 Queen Elizabeth issued a decree controlling the performance of plays; all scripts were subject to censorship. Sir Francis Walsingham, the Queen's spymaster, founded The Queen's Men in 1583 as a political mouthpiece. Their role was to spread Protestantism and royalist propaganda through a divided realm.



Context

- Renaissance humanism vs. providentialism
- The Dutch thinker, Erasmus, wrote of mankind as central to the world, and this humanist concern was the basis of most Renaissance thought.
- Pico asserted that humanity's uniqueness stems from the freedom to determine their direction and purpose in life – '*we may be what we will to be*'
- In contrast French Philosopher Montaigne rejected Pico's belief in humanity's divinity and nobility. He embraced the philosophy of skepticism '*man is a marvellously vain, inconsistent, and unstable thing...*'



Context

Richard III

- **Machiavellian politics:** Machiavelli's view of politics and power (*The Prince* (1513) represents a humanist move towards a secular notion of leadership. Richard III rejects traditional Christian virtues and morality to pursue at any cost personal power and uses language as a persuasive weapon.
- *'Politics have no relation to morals.'*



Context

- The morality play was structured around the psychomachia, the conflict between Good and Evil over the human soul. Although the character of Richard III has its origins in the Vice as he reminds the audience – *‘Thus like the formal Vice, Iniquity, / I moralize two meanings in one word’* - he is more subtle and human. His actions rather than his nature are evil.
- The decisive factor was the rebirth of Greek and Roman tragedy that centred on humanity’s flaws. Renaissance literature shifted away from the religious and metaphysical subjects of earlier medieval literature. The movement towards the renaissance humanist approach to life influenced the development of characters who were becoming more human.



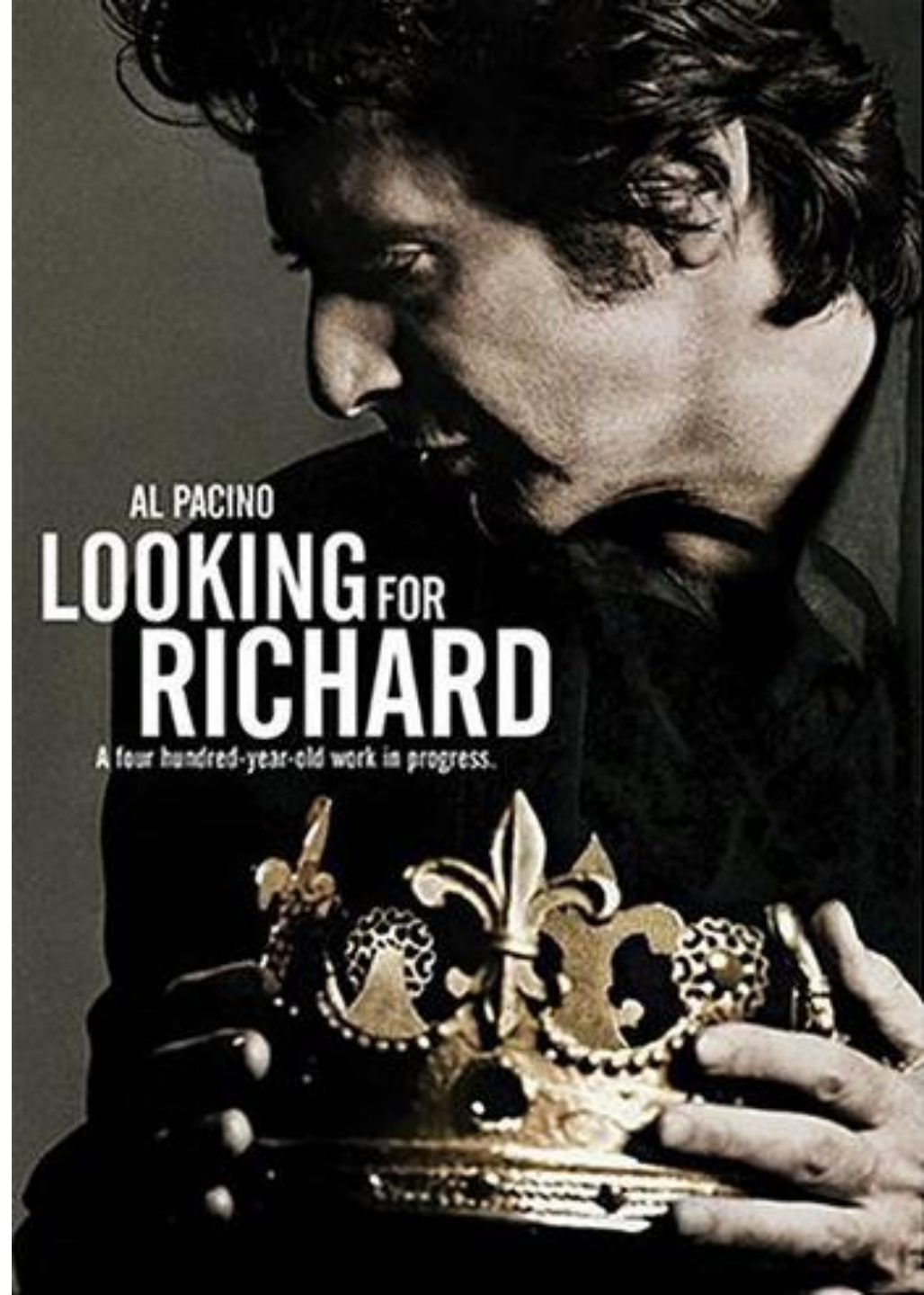
Context

- Loss of trust and faith in politicians in a postmodern world that had witnessed the terrible loss of life in World War II, Korea and Vietnam, and the rise of fascism and oppression.
- The controversial president Richard Nixon had resigned as president in 1974 after a near-impeachment. *'They canvas like politicians, complete with lies and innuendo.'*



Context

- The focus of the documentary is on Richard's individuality and his machinations.
- Humanist self-determinism reflects the 20th century existentialism and the economic rationalism and the rise of the powerful corporate giants where individuality and humanity's will to succeed - (the American Dream is grounded in the belief that it is the individual who can determine their own fate) were valued.





Values

Moderation
Honesty

Integrity
Loyalty

Compassion
Justice

Reshaping Form

King Richard III

- Meta-theatrical historiography
- Senecan revenge tragedy
- Richards' meta-theatrical role as conducting a "*direful pageant*" playing a range of roles from loving brother, desperate lover, benevolent statesman and protector of the crown.

Looking for Richard

- Meta-documentary
- Stream-of-consciousness 'drama' documentary
- Pastiche
- Pacino's role as director and actor merge
- He controls artistically the representation and the content
- Pacino's pageant is 'insubstantial' as his film is never made - '*We're never going to finish making this movie.*'

Connections

Form

- ***Richard III***: Historical tragedy continuing the story from *Henry VI Part III* and concluding the historical tetralogy that began with *Richard II*.
- The play's rising action builds to the moment when Richard is crowned king and then rapidly falls with Richard descending into darker deeds and others deserting him until the final battle scene where he is killed and Richmond triumphs.
- 'As soon as he gets what he wants...the emptiness.'



Richard

- *'Already in this play he is thinking about human beings as actors and about the stage.'*
- Shakespeare has moved away from the creation of stereotypes that the Elizabethan audience were familiar with in the Christian Morality plays to create characters that are more human.



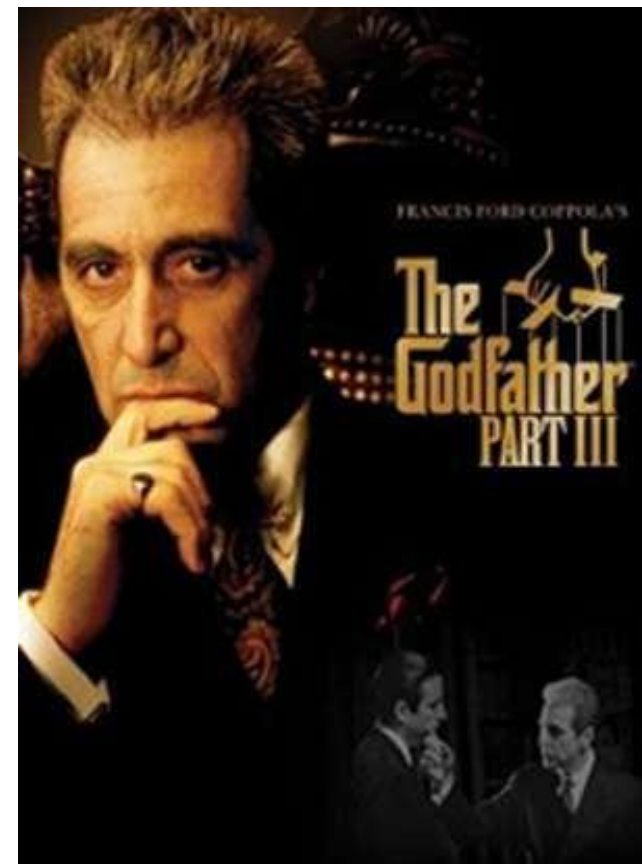
Richard

- Like Pacino, we are fascinated by the compelling, unscrupulous Richard who seduces us through his soliloquies and asides to be co-conspirators.
- Vice who entertains the audience with his villainy and sardonic humour.
- Deformity was synonymous with God punishing evil
- Machiavel who subscribes to the philosophy that “*the ends justifies the means*” and in the pursuit and retention of power suspends morality.



Richard

- Pacino interested in power and politics, manipulation and deceit as well as the moral dilemma of embracing power.
- *'But he has let the pursuit of power totally corrupt him. He is alienated from his own body and his own self'* (Kimble).
- Mafioso malevolence
- Reflects Hollywood's obsession with the dark villain.





The Ideas

Iniquity

- Richard is the embodiment of evil. His character with its origins in the Vice of the morality plays takes perverse pleasure in deception and trickery.
- Richard expresses no remorse or emotion when he orders the death of his brother Clarence and the young princes.
- *‘Are you now going to dispatch this thing?’*
- *‘Shall I be plain? I wish the bastards dead’*
- Margaret calls Richard *‘the slave of nature and the son of hell’*. She represents the inescapability of humanity committing evil.

Iniquity

- Richard's deformity and lack of social graces stigmatise him, and invite a modicum of understanding exposing his vulnerability and providing a partial reason for his evil actions. *'I shall despair. There is no creature loves me, / And if I die no soul shall pity me.'*
- He is the malevolent outsider rejected by his own mother.
- Richard refers to his deformity and lack of friends throughout the play. *'And no friends to back my suit withal/But the plain devil and dissembling looks?'*
(1.ii)

Iniquity

- Pacino's representation of Richard reflects his evil but he does reveal some vulnerability.
- He injects Mafioso malevolence into his role.
- The other actors are fascinated with how far Richard is prepared to go. They acknowledge the terrible consequences of his actions. *"But he has let the pursuit of power totally corrupt him. He is alienated from his own body and his own self"* (Kimble).

Rhetoric

- Richard plays with words and half-truths. When he is persuading Anne to love him, he tells her ironically that his heart *"'Tis figured in my tongue."* (1.ii)
- Buckingham is a master of political rhetoric. Richard owes much of his success to the cooperation of his co-conspirator and masterful orator.



Power of Language

- Vanessa Redgrave speaks lyrically of the power and emotion of Shakespeare's use of language – *'the beauty, depth, passion, music of his words.'*
- The African American speaks eloquently about how words today have lost their meaning and feeling, *'If we felt what we said, and say less we'd mean more.'*



Human frailty

- Pacino chooses to feature at length the scenes from the play that reveal humanity's flaws such as the seduction of Lady Anne and the murder of Clarence.
- *'Let's get this right, this guy Gloucester, has killed Anne's husband and father-in-law and the father-in-law's body starts to bleed when he comes by and he still manages to win the girl?'*



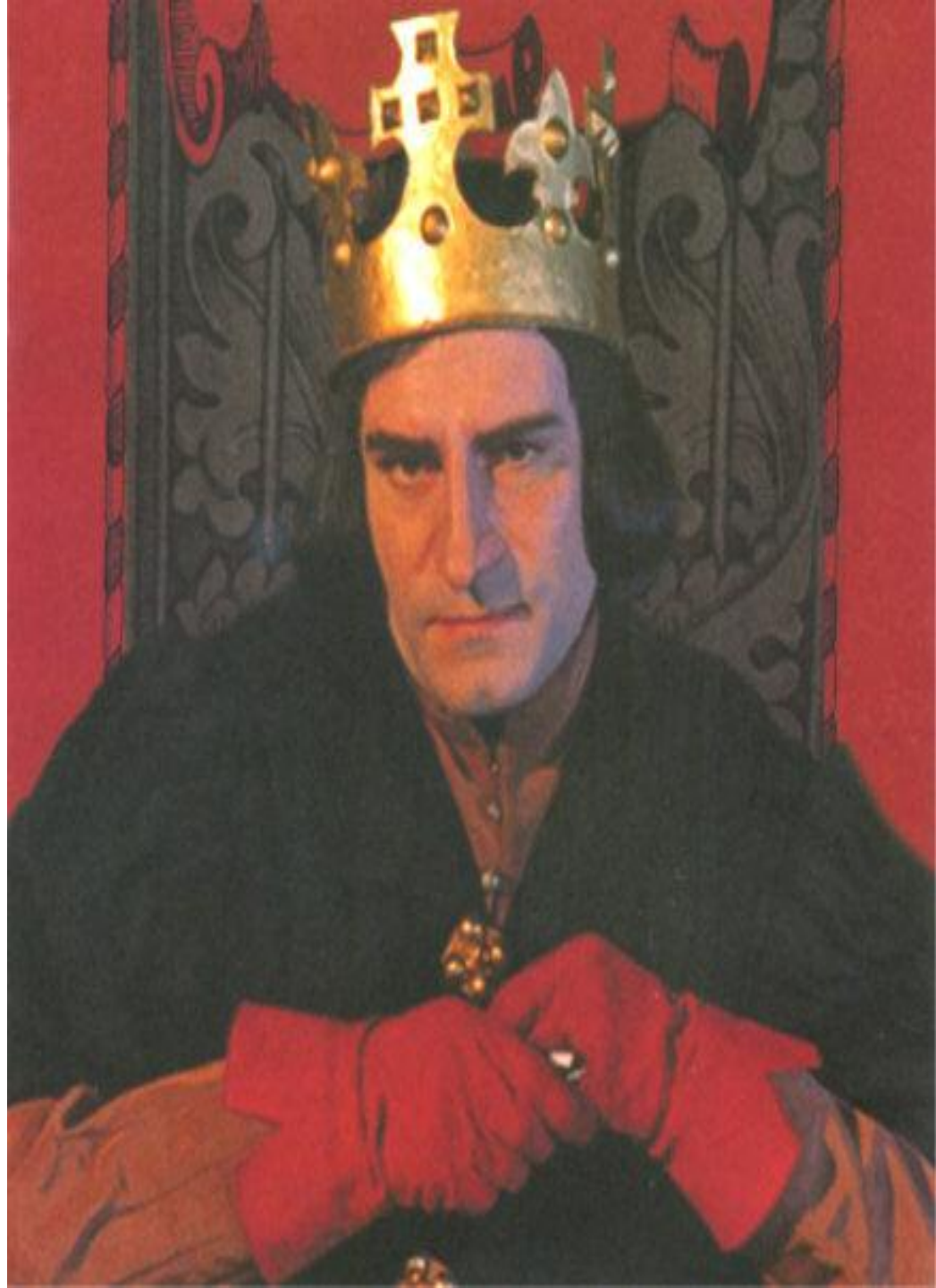
Complicity

- *'It is double pleasure to deceive the deceiver.'*
- The moral weakness of the other characters enable Richard to succeed.
- Brackenbury's inaction, *'I will not reason what is meant hereby, / Because I will be guiltless of the meaning'* (A1, siv).
- The Archbishop is persuaded by Richard to hand the young princes over to him removing the protection of the church.
- *"He can use the fear, the general turmoil to his advantage. He knows these people hate each other. He'll use their hatred to manipulate them"* (Pacino).



Duplicity

- Richard is an equivocator with a protean talent who deceives to mock and manipulate others. *'As I am subtle, false, and treacherous...'* (A1, si) *'And thus I clothe my naked villainy...And seem a saint when I most play the devil.'* (A1, siii)
- He ironically reveals the truth to his victims.
- Machiavelli asserted that *'one must know how to disguise his nature well, and how to be a fine liar and hypocrite.'*



Duplicity

- During Richard's battle with his conscience he uses language to deceive himself.
- Pacino and the actors are fascinated with Richard and Buckingham's ability to use rhetoric to deceive others.
- *'They canvas like politicians, complete with lies and innuendo'* (Pacino).



Ambition & Power

- Ecclesiastes 2:11: *‘Yet when I surveyed all that my hands had done and what I had toiled to achieve, everything was meaningless, a chasing after the wind; nothing was gained under the sun.’*
- The unconscionable, ambitious pursuit of power is palpable in *King Richard III*. Richard is not the only character who betrays, manipulates, kills and lies his way to obtain power and control.
- Shakespeare reminds the audience of the shortcomings of blindly pursuing power or riches, the hollowness of titles and reputation and the folly of vanity and self-importance.

Ambition and Power

- Hasting's last words remind the audience about how humanity focuses too much on self and loses sight of spirituality and the meaning of life. *'O momentary grace of mortal men, / Which we more hunt for than the grace of God.'* (AIII, siv)
Brackenbury echoes the same sentiment: *'Princes have but their titles for their glories...'* (AI, siv)
- Richard repeatedly refers to his plain looks and misshapen form. *'Cheated of feature by dissembling nature, / Deformed, unfinished, sent before my time'* (AI, si) The motif of the looking glass reflects his contradictory insecurity and narcissism.
- In the final scene before battle when he states *'Richard loves Richard'* he tries to assert his narcissistic embrace of self, yet the fractured lines reveal his emptiness.

Ambition & Power

- *'There is no creature loves me, / And if I die no soul shall pity me.'* (Av, siii) – The terrible consequences of suppressing your humanity for power. His villains die alone and without respect or love. Pacino observes that Richard 'has no friends.'
- *"But he has let the pursuit of power totally corrupt him. He is alienated from his own body and his own self"* (Kimble).
- Impact on citizens: *'Bad is the world; and all will come to nought...'*



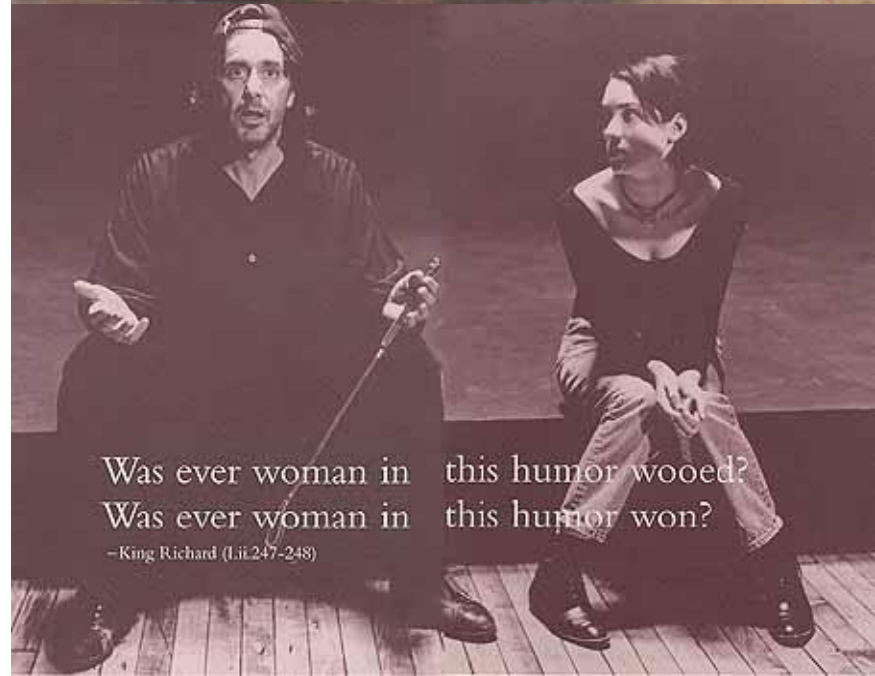
Ambition & Power

- *“The truth is that those in power have total contempt for everything they promise, everything they pledge, and this is really what Shakespeare’s great play is really about.”*
- In the 20th century the pursuit of power is still a concern; thus, providing one explanation for the continuing resonance of *King Richard III* and Pacino’s fascination.



Ambition & Power

- Pacino cleverly connects to Shakespeare's exploration of humanity's flaws to his own myopic pursuit of his grand project by intertextually referring to Prospero's famous lines from Shakespeare's last great play *The Tempest*.
- The actors in *Looking for Richard* are fascinated by the battle for power and the hatred that is palpable – '*They are clawing at each other for the throne!*'
- '*The gathering of the Dons in this room.*'



Conscience

- The abdication of an active conscience is demonstrated by many of the characters enabling Richard to achieve his Machiavellian rise to the throne.
- Shakespeare explores how individuals can ignore their conscience and commit evil such as the murderers of Clarence who hesitate only for a moment before taking his life or Buckingham who supports Richard until he makes that mistake of having to consider whether he supports the murder of the two young princes – *'He did all the dirty work and propped up the king.'*

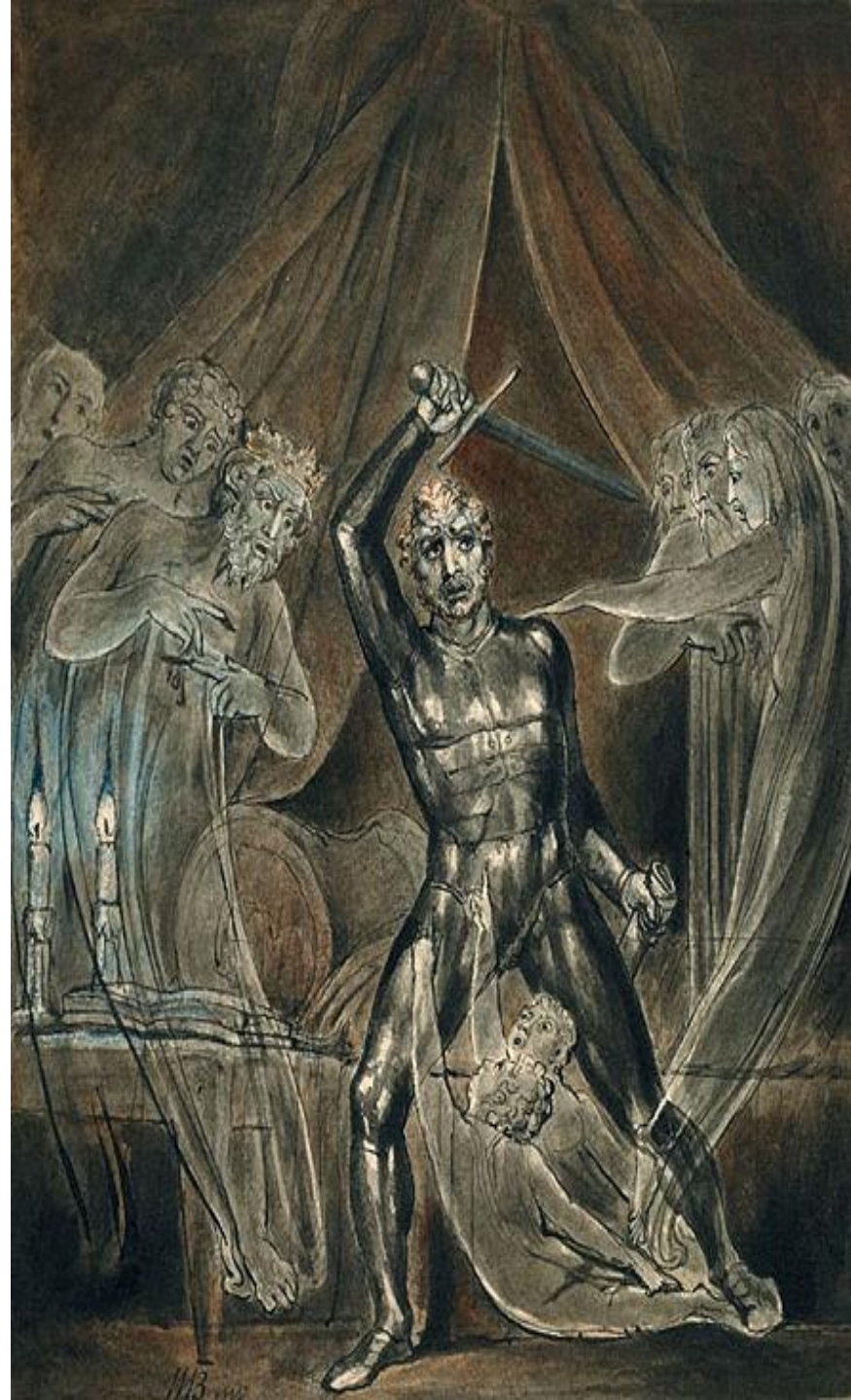


Conscience

- Richard equates conscience with something distinctly physical that he can control. He dismisses conscience as only 'a word' that has been created, denying any notion of incorporeality. However, the exclamatory tone and the call to arms metaphors suggest that Richard has to convince himself to believe his own words.
- *Conscience is but a word that cowards use,/Devis'd at first to keep the strong in awe: /Our strong arms be our conscience, swords our law!*

Conscience

- Richard's syntactically disjointed speech after the confrontation with the ghosts reveals his inner turmoil. *'Richard loves Richard; that is, I am I. /Is there a murderer here? No. Yes, I am.'* (Av, siii)
- Shakespeare employs dialogia; two opposing voices, one accusatory; one defensive.
- The audience would recall Margaret's curse, *'The worm of conscience begnaw thy soul!'* (A1siii)
- Pacino's representation is emotionally charged.



Morality

- ***RIII***: Women are crucial in foreshadowing events and as the voice of morality proclaiming Richard's evil and his predestined fate.



Morality/Providence

- Vice character that satirised women as a means of highlighting his genius and draw in the audience.
- Contextual construct of the Three Mary's of the resurrection plays who represent the central mystery of Christianity and predestination
- Anne, the Duchess and Elizabeth as the forces of predestination, fate and divine retribution against Richard's sacrilegious actions.



Providence

- The women shift audience sympathy from Richard by showing the anguish his evil causes on a personal level. They are Richard's victims and the voice of pre-destiny.
- Margaret has a Nemesis choric function, her curses foreshadowing the divine retribution of pre-destiny for Richard as "*the troubler of the poor world's peace*"



Revenge

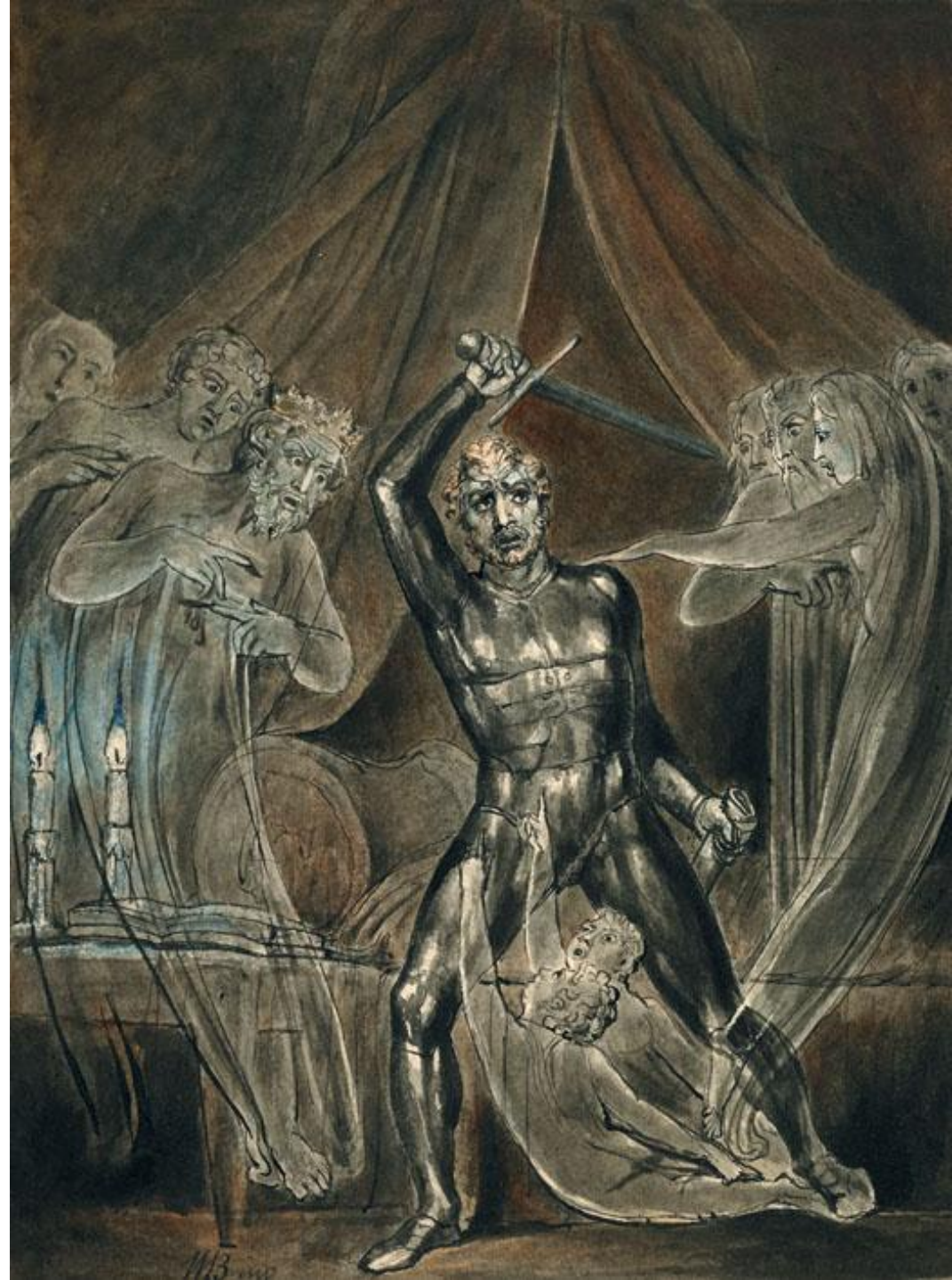
- Although the play follows the Senecan revenge tragedy form, there is no redemption. Richmond avenges the tragic deaths when he kills Richard in battle, but his actions are not motivated by vengeance.
- The women are the ones who speak mainly of revenge. Ironically, they are unable to enact it. Anne embittered by the murder of her husband and father-in-law retorts to Richard '*To be revenged on him that killed my husband.*' (1.ii) Margaret reminds all of the characters about her right to seek vengeance. She condemns Richard to '*No sleep close up that deadly eye of thine, / Unless it be while some tormenting dream / Affrights thee with a hell of ugly devils!*' (R3 1.iii)
- Critic Bevington (2004) asserts '*Prophecies... give structure to the sequence of retributive actions and keep grim score.*'

Notes from the Marking Centre

- *Candidates who clearly understood the purpose of their texts were able to demonstrate **conceptual understanding** and respond personally.*
- *High-range responses used key terms particular to their **focus area** to create their own thesis, and displayed an ability to evaluate and analyse.*
- *Better responses developed a thesis which demonstrated a strong **conceptual understanding** of the module and the elective.*
- *Better responses introduced a thesis to answer the question in their introduction and maintained and supported it throughout the essay.*

Approach

- A line of argument that responds to the question and presents your point of view.
- Two supporting ideas.
- Facilitates integration of texts
- Developed and supported by judicious textual support



Theses

- Both *Richard III* and *Looking for Richard* are products of different times yet they are connected through their exploration of what it is to be human.



Theses

- While the context, language and form have changed, *Richard III* and *Looking for Richard* are connected through the core value of moderation.



Theses

- *Looking for Richard* reconnects us with Shakespeare's characters, values and themes reminding us that they are timeless. We can look for Richard, and find him, in the world around us.



Shakespeare and Pacino ground the evil of Richard differently in their respective texts. Shakespeare's Richard is not merely an ambitious villain, but the personification of a metaphysical evil – a Machiavellian prince whose vice-like character is derived from the medieval morality play. These attributes manifest themselves in Richard's deformity – part of a religious paradigm whose didactic purpose would not have been lost on an Elizabethan audience. However, broad contextual shifts have resulted in Pacino downplaying the significance of Richard's deformity in his adaption. Instead, the director attempts to recreate a villain for our times, emphasising mainly the political characteristics of a tyrant-king rendered recognisable to a modern audience.